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A DETERMINATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SELECTED PERSONAL AND EXPERIENCE FACTORS WHICH TEND TO INFLUENCE COLLEGIATE ADJUSTMENT AT THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE

- Matthew Halchin -

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research study was to determine the relationships which are present among some personal and experience factors of college students, and some evidences of collegiate adjustment. The need for having a better understanding of students continues to exist.

Procedure of this Study

Proulx had completed a study of some 443 male college freshmen during their first year in college. Since there was an opportunity to use some of the data which he had gathered, and combine this with additional data to be acquired during the latter part of the fourth semester for the same group, the investigator of this study chose this group of students. Certain questions were selected from Proulx's questionnaire and were repeated in the present study. This provided some longitudinal date. In addition, the writer constructed his own list of questions to supplement what was already known about these students. Seventy-five items comprised the interview schedule which was given preliminary trial and then was refined. Interviews were conducted during the last month of the fourth semester with the 339 students who had remained in college.

Limitations of the Study

The data included depend for their accuracy upon the accuracy with which the students gave their responses to the interviewer. Another outstanding limitation of this study is the fact that the data are listed for groups of students.

Summary of Findings

The summary of findings which follows consists of statements of some evidences of collegiate adjustments in terms of some personal and experience factors selected from the data. These highlights from the data are grouped into four areas of student adjustment; scholastic, social, vocational, and economic. The reader should keep in mind that all four areas have some elements in common. Factors and evidences pertaining to scholastic adjustment are presented first.

Scholastic Adjustment

Several factors, some expected and others unexpected, tend to influence the amount of time a student spends in studying. College teachers may be interested to know that a student's habits of studying seem to persist more often than they change. At least 60 percent of the students who studied over eight hours a week during their first semester were studying the same amount during the fourth semester. However, forty-four

per cent of these students who studied only one to seven hours a week in their first semester continued the same pattern in the fourth semester.

High school rank attained seems to be an index to the amount of studying a student will do in college. Only one out of eight superior students studied less than seven hours a week during the first semester. During the same semester, however, 88 per cent of the students in the first fifth high school rank group studied a minimum of 16 hours a week.

Strikingly, the difficulty of teaching college students is indicated by the report that one out of every three students stated they were interested in not more than half of their fourth semester courses. Another clue to scholastic adjustment is revealed by the fact that seven out of ten superior students reported more than 75 per cent of their fourth semester courses were interesting, while two out of every three students of inferior high school achievement reported less than one-half of their courses interesting, and no one in this group indicated that all of their courses were interesting. In general, the older the student upon entrance to college the more interesting were his courses. More than three-fourths of the courses were interesting for two out of three students who entered college at age seventeen, and for seven out of eight students who entered college at age nineteen.

Students' going home for visits may influence scholastic adjustment. Two-thirds of the students of superior high school rank visited their homes not more than three times during the fourth semester. In contrast, more than one-fourth of the students of inferior high school rank visited their homes at least nine times. From this standpoint it is interesting to note which groups of students go home most often. Fifty-seven per cent of the students from farming communities visited their homes over four times during the semester. Almost three-fourths of the students from communities of 25,000 or more population visited their homes three times or less.

Seemingly, a general index of scholastic adjustment is expressed by some evidences of enjoyableness of college life. One of the factors allied with enjoyableness of college life is high school achievement. Three-fourths of the superior high school group stated that college life was enjoyable, whereas 46 per cent of the inferior high school group reported college life enjoyable. College life was enloyable for 57 per cent of the students whose parents influenced their choice of a college, and for 76 per cent of those students who chose this college because of its course offerings. Students who were first away from home by the age of twelve were one-third more likely to find college life enjoyable than those who were first away from home at the age of nineteen.

Social Adjustment

For many students an important aspect of making good in college is social adjustment, which is estimated here in terms of some evidences of social activity. The evidences presented are: college residence, participation in active group leisure time activities, time spent in social activities, parental encouragement to take part in cocurricular activities, student leadership positions, voting at all-college elections, and church attendance.

The three places of college residence, dormitory, fraternity, and home in town, provide different opportunities for social activities. Salesmen's sons, three out of four of them, lived in the fraternities and the remainder were almost evenly divided between dormitories and town homes. Fraternities attracted less than a third of the sons of skilled workers, while a little more than a third chose to live in town homes. Town homes drew 39 per cent of the older students who entered college at age 19 or over. The younger students, who entered college at age 17 or 18, chose to live in town homes only half as often.

Another evidence of social adjustment is the number of hours spent each week in social activities. Various factors appear to influence this manifestation of social adjustment. Almost two-thirds of the students who were first away from their families, continuously for one month or more, before the age of twelve spent more than eight hours a week in fourth semester social activities, but a little less than half of those students who were at least 19 before leaving their families spent the same amount of time in social activities.

Father's occupation seems to have some bearing on the extent of the sons' participation in college social life. The sons of fathers having more education participated more heavily in social life than did the sons of fathers with less education. Two out of three sons of fathers with at least 15 years of education spent a minimum of eight hours weekly in social activities compared to only 42 per cent of the students who fathers had a maximum of eight years of education. Salesmen's sons were more social-minded than were the sons of skilled workers, with three out of four of the salesmen's sons and one out of three of the skilled worker's sons spending at least eight hours a week in social activities.

Father's education and parental encouragement of participation in cocurricular activities seem to go together. A third of the sons whose fathers have eight years or less education were not encouraged by their parents to participate in cocurricular activities, while only 16 per cent of the sons with fathers having 15 or 16 years of education had not received such encouragement.

Voting in all-college elections and holding student leadership positions are seemingly aspects of social adjustment. Fifty per cent more of the scholastically superior students voted in the fourth semester all-college elections than the inferior students. Three out of four students with four or more siblings did not occupy any leadership positions in college, compared to a little over half of the students with one sibling who did not assume leadership positions. Of those students who were away from home at a very early age a little less than half held one or more leadership positions. Only a fourth of the students who were away from home for the first time in their late teens held one to two leadership positions.

Another possible evidence of social adjustment is church attendance. The data show that the church-goers are those students with superior high school achievement. One-half of them attended church once a week compared to a half of the inferior high school group who attended church only once a month or not at all. When compared to pre-college church attend-

ance 40 per cent of the entire group of students decreased their church attendance after coming to college.

Vocational Adjustment

The data presented in this section is concerned only with factors appearing to influence vocational choice. The amount of education of the father seems to have some bearing on the extent and kind of influence of parents on their son's choice of a vocation. One out of four sons whose fathers had nine to ten years of education cooperated with their parents in choosing a vocation. In contrast, well over half of the sons whose fathers had 13 to 14 years of education cooperated with their parents in making this important decision.

High School rank and age at entrance to college are associated with vocational choice making. Inferior high school students were 64 per cent without a choice in the fourth semester of college, which is in sharp contrast to the 22 per cent of the superior students who had not made a satisfactory choice of vocation.

Of those students who entered college at age 17, seventy per cent were certain of their vocational choice. Certainty of vocational choice was reported by 86 per cent of the older students who entered college at nineteen years or above. A fifth more of the sons of unskilled workers were more certain of their vocational choice than were the sons of business executives.

Economic Adjustment

Evidences of economic adjustment in this study are indicated in terms of proportion of college expenses earned, and hours spent on paid part-time jobs. Several factors tend to influence these evidences. Students from farms and those with more brothers and sisters seem to take greater responsibility for helping themselves financially in college. Whereas nearly a half of the students from farming areas earned over half of their college expenses, only a quarter of the college expenses were earned by about a half of the students from communities of 25,000 or more. Students having three or more siblings are fifty per cent more likely to earn at least half of their college expenses than only children. Fifty per cent of the students whose fathers had less than eight years education tend to earn a greater proportion of their college expenses than do the sons of fathers with 13 or 14 years of education.

Only six per cent of the students without siblings, in contrast to almost a third of those students who have at least four siblings, worked at least eight hours a week on paid part-time jobs.

The dissertation makes comments on need for further research in student adjustment.